

Islamic Centre: Press Release December 2010

The Islamic Centre expresses its condolences to the victims of the terrorist attacks in Sweden. Such criminal attacks are antithetical to Islam, as Allaah says in the Qur'aan: **"Whoever kills an innocent soul, it as if he has killed the whole of mankind"**.

The alleged perpetrator, Taymour Abdul Wahab attended our mosque for a brief period of time during the month of Ramadan, 2006. Prior to this, we had never seen him, or heard of him. Whilst attending our mosque, he started preaching extremist ideas to members of our congregation. The mosque committee advised him of the error of his ways, and he was told not to preach extremist ideas in the mosque. Unfortunately he did not take heed of our advice and continued his preaching. Three weeks after he first attended the mosque, we decided to publicly refute his views. This was done after the morning prayers which were attended by over 100 worshippers. Taymour, then stormed out of the mosque, and we never heard from him again.

One of the questions that has been raised is why the police were not informed. Firstly Taymour, never preached violent radicalisation, his preaching was centred around two issues; declaring the leaders of the Muslim states to be apostates, and secondly harsh criticism of the Muslim scholars. Such views do not necessarily lead to violent radicalisation, they are not illegal, and we would probably be accused of wasting police time if we reported them.

Secondly, our masjid has been very effective in refuting violent extremism; many former extremists have now joined us in promoting the community harmony. If we were to report every individual who held extremist views to the police, our strategy in tackling extremism would fail. Rather than come to us and give us the opportunity to clarify their misconceptions, these individuals would go underground and associate only with like minded people.

Thirdly, from a civil liberties perspective, should one be reported to the police just for holding extremists views? No doubt we have a duty to report crimes or planned crimes to the police, but are we now required to be 'thought police'. If everyone started informing the police about others who have extremist views (such as the 800,000 who voted BNP at the last election) the police would never get any work done.

Fourthly, groups such as al-Muhaajiroon are constantly espousing extremist views, yet when members of our mosque confronted them, we were threatened with arrest. In fact the police even prevented us from distributing anti-extremist literature near their stall.

We do not believe that Luton is a hot bed of extremism, those holding extremist views are less than one per cent of Muslims. Unfortunately, the highly offensive publicity stunts by extremist groups such as al-Muhaajiroon receive disproportionate media attention, thus giving credence to the lie that Islamic extremism is endemic in Luton and the UK. On the other hand, the real threat of terror attacks by white supremacists or by dissident Irish republicans is played down. The Islamic Centre in Luton will continue its campaign against violent radicalisation and in promoting community cohesion. The community of Luton must come together and not let the extremists such as al-Muhaajiroon and the EDL divide us. They are two sides of the same coin.